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609 people kept their distance, and among them some pithy proverbs were spoken to bear upon the shortcomings of the white man. One or two of them turned to repeat to the dead what had been said, and there was great laughter. Sedefo [775] came to assure us that the dead man liked it very much. For the dead, it appeared, were especially susceptible to humor and to exceptional occasions.

964 About us, or edging their way toward us, were the 298 younger men in their ceremonial dress, the toga-like cloth covering their bodies, but leaving one shoulder bared for respect, and the women in their knee-length *pangi*, or [301] cloths, hanging from the waist, and their shining brass rings reaching from wrist to elbow and from ankle halfway up to the knee. Among the dancers, but standing somewhat [534] aloof, could be seen a man or woman with seed rattles about the ankles. These were the fine dancers. Of them our informant had spoken when he said, "They dance well at Gankwe."

964 Carved stools were placed for us facing the coffin a little [350] to the left of the singers, where we could best see the dancing. One or two lanterns were moved to give us better light. The drummers, who had not left their places, took up the rhythm again—one of the women had us know that the spirit of the dead man had communicated to the spirits of the drummers that he wanted to see the dancing resumed. The singing began—a woman's falsetto voice and a chorus; the hand clapping of the singers and bystanders emphasized the basic rhythm. It was slow at first, then quickened, and the dancing became more animated.

"They dance seketi," whispered our friends. "Later they will dance awasa."

964 The dancing was confined to a comparatively small space. 535 It began with a barely perceptible motion of the feet of the dancers to the rhythm of the drums and the hand clapping. Then the feet began to execute figures in place, without leaving the ground, the arms hanging loosely at the side. This was continued for some time, until, arms flexed and held rigid at the elbow, and knees bent but rigid, too, the

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intricate steps began. The movement of the feet, angular and precise, was reiterated by the outstretched palms, while all the muscles of the hips took up the rhythm. Now one of the men with the seed rattles at his feet danced facing a woman who also had these rattles, and the dance became theirs with a chorus of dancers moving more and more to the side, keeping the rhythm with the feet. The drums beat faster, the hand clapping became louder. Those two balanced their bodies as they bent their knees lower and lower, all the while executing the figures with feet, arms, and hips, and how unaware they seemed of the audience! And even of each other, for what awareness there was to quicken the pulse of the dancing was more than one man's awareness of one woman. It might have been a dance to Asaase—the great Earth Mother—but it was, in fact, dancing for the dead, for the two would turn again and again to face the coffin, as the others had done, except during the intervals when they recalled the white man and woman in back, and turned to dance to us and our flashlights.

Seketi, awasa. . . . The dances changed, and the songs, and the drum rhythms changed, too. The children at our feet had fallen asleep and lay doubled over, their heads resting upon their toes. More men joined the dancers. It was long past midnight. The women who had infants on their backs moved away silently in the direction of their huts, but when an elderly woman tried to go, too, she was reprimanded and sat down again.

There was another leader for the singing, and another. A man's falsetto was heard in a long recitative that preceded the dancing to the massed voices of the chorus. He faced now the dead, now us, as he improvised. Once more it was gay.

The dancing became more and more spirited, but when a dancer had continued in the circle for some time, an older woman coming forward from among the bystanders would put her arm about her and exclaim the singsong, "*Adoo!* . . . *Adoo!* . . . *Adoo!*" Others came forward to con-

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888 young. Once she, too, had liked to have her calf look round and full.

[437] [876] "Will you exchange this bottle of palm oil for tobacco?" she asked, showing her empty clay pipe.

She came in, saying she would like to rest, and began unfastening her top tunic so that she might make a pad of it on which to sit down on the ground, for the earth spirits [784] forbid women who had reached puberty to sit upon the bare earth. In her second tunic, somewhat fresher than the top one, she stood hesitating, looking about her for a place to sit down, until we brought her a carved stool we had bought the day before. Instead of putting on the top pangi again, she used it to cover her knees.

[576] "*Bak'a muye*," she said, "white woman, you ought to cover your knees, too, when you sit."

And sitting there, examining us and our belongings, she muttered her comments about our appearance and dress as she smoked, and muttering she swayed slightly, until the swaying rhythm seemed to bring a melody into her head, and she began to sing.

[533] "*The American Bak'a*
Have come from far,
American koni
Has brought them
To the Saramacca River,
To the Saramacca people;
They must not sicken
They must not die."

While the men on the shore talked and called upon their gods to keep them free, the woman rocked and sang this invocation for our safety, forgetting for the moment that we were whites, whom the ancestors hated.

"You have so much wealth," she said to the white man, looking about her at our provision boxes, "you must have many wives."

And back again she went to her song, repeating the words over and over, until seeing people approach she rose slowly and went back to the river where her rice was drying.

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implied), and he repeated the word over and over, until this led us to talk about singing, and at last we had them consent to dance susa for us. It had to be done very quietly, in the slight clearing in back of the shelter. Susa is an African dance. It is danced by men only, in pairs, and is something of a game. The one who wins "kills" his opponent. The earth spirits are said especially to like it, and it is danced in the fields or in the villages for them.

There they stood, Yamati and Sabape, facing each other, their enlarged navels almost touching. One agreed to be "in," and one "out," and as they began, their jaws came forward in a patterned, pugnacious way, and their arms moved to reproduce in pantomime shield and spear, while the feet crossed and recrossed.

Kesi-kesi g'a S'sa
Zond'o linga
Linga-li

The monkeys
Go to dance susa
Without rings.

Huh, huh, huh!

They sang the song over and over again, panting at the end of each verse to dramatize combat.

"I killed him," said Yamati. He had won, and they began again. If the one who had agreed to be "in" had his foot on the outside as they clashed, then he lost—he was killed.

4

As they were dancing, we noticed a young man we had never seen before. He was standing watching the youngsters at their play, smiling as though he enjoyed their contest. He was very dark, even for a Bush Negro, short and stocky, with unusual muscular development of arm and chest and thigh. His age, one would judge, was nineteen or twenty. He turned his smile on us when he realized we were noticing him.

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scratched like a "*tigri*"—a tiger, for this is how the Bush Negroes name the jaguar. Later, when we saw him dance the Tigri Kromanti dance, we witnessed one of the most realistic feline interpretations imaginable. But that is another matter.

Now Apanto was an obia man to be reckoned with, and his fellow villagers and the villagers of neighboring settlements treated him with a deference that his age alone could never have commanded. And it was this Apanto who now came up and said that he would sing the sacred Kromanti songs for our phonograph.

"You will not understand the songs. They will be in the Kromanti language," he warned us. "They are strong, and the machine must be strong to carry them."

It happens that a field phonograph is anything but strong. The mechanism is simple, since the instrument must be light enough to be carried about, and yet it often is subjected to all manner of hard usage. To this is added the [126] hazard of the climate. The turntable is actuated by a belt running from the mechanism inside the case, and the ends of this belt are glued together. This, to be sure, we discovered later. At the moment, we met Apanto's challenge with assurance. We did not doubt that the machine was spiritually strong.

126 533 [197] 539

What he said about the Kromanti language was true. The Kromanti tongo, of which we had been told during our first visit here, we were finding to be an actuality, and although we took down the words as he sang them, aided in hearing them by the repetitions, their meaning was unknown to us. Some of them we learned later. Some of them we knew. "Obia" we knew concerned the spirit, [176] the vague force known by that name, while "Amba" was [551] a deity sacred to Saturday, and was given as a "day name" to women born on that day of the week. This, then, is what he sang:

"*Ma djeni ye-ye*
Obia kule ma djeni no-ho
Obia mo-ye

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WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

Amba djeniyi, obia-mi yi-yi
Mo djeni-o
Mo djeni-e-ye
Obia mi-i
Man djeni no-ho
Obia mo-i
Amba djeni-e-i, obia-i-i
Man djeni no-ho, obia-i."

The music was slow and soft, and in Apanto's appealing voice the song took on a strangely moving quality. But as he sang, a stir went through the people who were listening.

"He calls his obia, ai."

"His obia will fight the spirit of the machine."

"The Bakra is cunning, but obia is strong. We shall see."

The song came to an end, the recorder was lifted. We looked at Apanto. "Will you sing another? See, the thing is not finished. There is room for more."

He looked. Yes, one could see there was room for more. Yes, he would sing more. This time the song was livelier, louder. As Apanto sang, he seemed to force the song into the horn, and this time there were no murmurs from those watching.

"*Yen-bo, yenbo,*
A yen-bo-bo no
Yen-bo, yenbo,
A yen-bo. . . . "

And with this the machine began to give way. There was a rattling sound, a scratching. The machine went more slowly, then stopped. About us the murmurs became excited. Hastily we fitted a new cylinder, hastily we tested it. It was no use. We soon found the cause. The glue had softened in the tropical dampness, and the ends had pulled loose. It was almost dark, and there was no sun to dry a newly applied coat of glue.

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126 Apanto looked at us. "The Bakra is cunning," he
533 repeated. "But obia is stronger. In the bush obia rules.
123 Kromanti is too strong for the spirit of the machine."

Swiftly the dark of the bush came down. The people who had been watching, listening to what had passed, were leaving to go to their villages and to spread the news of the power of obia, and how Apanto had defeated the spirit of the machine that talks back what has been said to it. And with the gathering dark, we could sense the pulse of the drums and hear a faint echo of the shrill cry of the women dancing at Gankwe for the spirit of the dead man who lay there in the house of mourning.

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[48] had not acted well toward the Granman. It would be best if we did not stop there. At the others the Granman could assure us hospitality. Then there was talk of hauling wood and making rafts, for our host, who knew these people well, moved safri, too, until he at last felt the moment had come to talk about buying a boat from Ajako.

[439] When the arrangements of the sale were concluded, 123 Ajako came back to talk with us. He had heard that we had 126 a machine which the Kromanti spirit had broken, was it true? Did it really go again? They said the Bakra had much cunning. They said the Bakra knew African magic.

The Bakra said he knew something about Africa. The Ashanti people, for instance, were a fine people.

124 "*Ma na Asante, na Sa'macca sem-* . . . .—But the Ashanti 144 are Saramacca. . . . " But he would go no further, having 115 spoken only one syllable of the word for people. He became guarded. Yes, there were some Anago people from Africa on this Saramacca River, and Dahomey, and Loango, and Fanti; the Ibo peoples were not on this river. . . . And again he would say no more. Later, when we had changed the subject, he said as if in both gratitude and explanation, "*Na sa-i-'akisi, a tranga poi*—You ask about strong things."

126 But he would sing into our machine, if we liked. He 115 would sing Kromanti, if we wanted him to do so. "I won't fight your machine," he said, smiling.

● [533] [539]

"*Anabobi, Anabobi,*
Anabobi, Anabobyo,
Tata Ando.
Anabobi, Ando,
Anabobi,
Tata Adjaini,
Anabobyo
Tata Fa'aku."

"They will understand this in Africa," he said, gravely, and then he moved toward the doorway and stood there

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501 609 "It is not good," he said aloud to us. "Its balance is not right. Look, it rolls . . . and besides, I have a kunu. I will go up in my own boat."

And so it was. Sedefo took his own boat up river, and another Gankwe boat was obtained, and there were four boats instead of three, and eight paddlers instead of six.

"Ya-hai! Kunu is costly for the white man as well as the black," Bayo said to Bibifo, his great-grandfather, for it was not his father, nor his grandfather, as he had later promised, who appeared to steer the boat in which Bayo was taking the Bakra and his woman up the river.

3

502 484 Bayo was at his best on the river. He loved it, and it treated him well. In the prow of the boat, swinging his pole-stick hand over hand, he steadily urged the boat upstream against the current, and sang as he poled.

● [533] [539]

"A-yai-yo,
A-yai-yea,
Money is finished in Suriname
Lower Cayenna took it!
A-yai-yo,
A-yai-yea."

[533] Over and over he repeated the seketi, with tantalizing variations in rhythm and melody on the traditional air, to which he knew so many sets of words. In and out went the pole-stick. In, until it struck the sand with a soft caressing glide, then a hard push, and three short steps back along the boat until Bayo's hand reached the upper end of the wood, and a final thrust, then pull, and over, and in, and once again the three short steps.

The other boats had got ahead. In the distance close to the bank they followed one another.

"*Mbwogu, mbwogu*—Hurry!" said old Bibifo in back.

Bayo turned and grinned. "*Ai, mbwogu, mati, mbwogu*—Yes, hurry, friend, hurry," he twitted his great-grandfather,

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smaller boats were to be brought up each by its own men. Each selected a place, and the shrill shouted directions could be heard above the falling water. Up, up, they came, the man at the stern holding with his stick, the man at the head up to his shoulders in water, tugging, pulling, hauling the boat over. Once Asikanu's pole slipped, and his boat swung toward a rock, but it caught again and he held it with the fierceness of a man defending himself against an enemy, and then he, too, cut across and found the firmness of the friendly sandy bottom.

But when the five boats were at last together above the falls, out came machetes to sharpen the ends of the pole-sticks, for an encounter such as they had had the moment before shredded the hard wood into fiber.

Ahead the water was still. The hard work of this day was over. The men straightened their loin cloths and again began to make their way along the banks of the river. The village where we would camp that night was somewhere before us. The sun was nearing the treetops, and the shrieking pairs of parrots were flying over us to the west, seeking their roosting places.

The short dusk was upon us.

"It is not far," said Bayo, speaking of the village ahead.

"Will we get there before dark?"

"*Massa Gadu sabi*—God alone knows."

"*No fe', Bak'a*—Don't be afraid. We know the river."

The Bush Negro and his river! Seeing the prodigious strength of the men, their great knowledge of current and rocks and channels, one was not afraid. Softly the pole-sticks slid into the sand banks, softly the paddles dipped, and Bayo sang his seketi.

"*N'an g'wa a Lamé*
A s'ib' ko' de muye."

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her become pale again. This may happen to you when you get to the Mamadam."

As he spoke, he began to beat on the table the drum rhythm which calls the river god, and he sang,

"*Today, today, O Spirit,*
Hard times are upon us
Ingi-o.
Hard times are upon us.
Today, today, Boyo,
Hard times are upon us
Ingi-e."

And then he sang another song, which he said had been sung at the time when black people were running away from slavery, and is still heard at dances to the spirits of the river, the *watra ingi*, as the river gods are called in the city. In it, he called on the agida, the great drum upon which, in town as in the bush, the Negroes call the river gods, and on *Kopsi*, the name of one of the spirits of the water. This time he sang,

"*I will play the agida today,*
I will knock the agida today-o
Kopsi will foil the magic
Of the crowing cock.
O, I will play the agida today,
I will knock the agida, today-o,
Kopsi will foil the magic,
Of the crowing cock.
I will play the agida today."

3

As we gained the island where the shrine itself stood and looked about us from the high rocks of the sacred spot, there lay before us in the early morning light a scene of inexpressible beauty. At dusk the narrow strips of land which forced the river into three channels had been like dark machetes plunged into the body of the great stream.

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away. It seemed dangerous even to notice the strip of white cotton which showed high above the falls, though the stick from which it hung we could not see.

"Human beings do not go there," Bayo had said warningly. "Human eyes must also not go there."

But the shrine at the Mamadam is a friendly place. There a man finds a moment's ease. For a brief interval, at least, the voyager upstream or down rests there to get his breath, as he makes ready for a new start. Directly below the falls is a stretch of still water, which follows upon the wearisome portage at the Musumba Prati and the struggle with the rapids just above it, while, when continuing up river, the boatmen face a succession of rapids before another stretch of quiet water is reached. It is not strange, therefore, that no man, whatever his need to make time, will fail to stop at the Mamadam long enough to make known to the Mother of the River his errand and to ask for the continuance of her protection.

This shrine is the home of the Great Mother of the inland waters, she who, above all else, had secured to the ancestors of these Bush Negroes their freedom from slavery. In the city and on the plantations of the coastal region the Negroes, under states of possession by the water gods, sing of their longing to join those at the Mamadam.

Let me die on the river, O!
Let me die on the water, O!
All the Ingi spirits
Are at the Mamadam,
Let me die on the river, O!

Deep in the interior, if one of the elders, let us say a man of the Dahomey clan, is alarmed at the prospect of the white man penetrating their bush, some man can be looked to, then, to say reassuringly, "Have no fear. They will not come beyond the Mamadam!"

For this river is their own. "Once, long, long ago," the legend was told us, "this river was but a creek. There were no great trees here, no rocks. There were no boats, no

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574 609 In the doorway of one of the huts, a woman squatted over a fire, and at her feet a child sat busying itself with pushing the firewood toward the center. Our cook had planted two forked sticks in the ground, and on them had hung our lanterns, so that we could see the woman silhouetted against the fire and the naked child on the ground singing the seketi which Bayo had sung for us so many [533] times on the river. Over and over the child tried the air, her mother humming it for her softly, while from the doorway of another house a man sat watching them. We had not noticed him until the lanterns had come. The planting [291] ground at harvest time is not a place a man frequents. He was a strange figure there on his low stool, as he sat wrapped to his neck in a large striped cloth. He made not the slightest move, uttered not a single word. But for his cough, he might have been a corpse propped up in the doorway. We stood hesitating whether to cross the short distance between us and the fire to greet the woman and the man, but before we could come close enough to them to speak, we heard Bayo calling us in a voice we had never heard him use in a strange village.

"Bak'a, Bak'a. Come. They want you inside." When we were out of earshot of the woman at the fire, he said in a whisper, "Do not go over to those houses. Tomorrow when we are away from here, I will tell you why. It is for that I called you."

We had no need, however, to puzzle over Bayo's warning. [164] Our cook, who had heard the conversation of the men, told us that the man in the doorway was a leper.

753 262 "You know how it happens, Massa? Among us townspeople it is this way. A child inherits a *trefu* from his father. It is one thing, or many things, he must not eat. If he eats what he should not, then he sickens. We know a person who has eaten his trefu by the spots that come out on his skin. If a man goes on eating the things which are his trefu, then the spots become worse and worse. He becomes a leper. So that's how it is."

He did not at once answer the questions we put to him.

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But Sedefo was still not impressed. 538

"We bush people have our own ways. How will it be with a long story, if the proper songs are not sung?"

So the discussion went on between Sedefo and the town boys, until among them they had gone over all the many details of how stories must be told. There was the interchange between the teller and his audience at the very beginning. Openings might differ. Here in the bush, one way was for the teller to cry "Mato!" and someone in his audience to call back "Tongoni!" What did this mean? It was a way to begin. That is how it was done long ago in the land of the Negroes. Did we not know that? Or the teller might begin with "Hireti!" and then the answer would be "Daieti!" But often, as well, the opening might be "Kri! Kra!" Sometimes, though now it was most often a way of beginning stories for children, the tale would be started with "Er tin tin," and the answer to this "Tin tin tin," in the manner of "Once upon a time."

What really mattered, however, was the way in which the intervals in the story-telling were dramatized. After the speaker had started his tale and had carried it to some incident where he paused for a moment, he would be interrupted by a call from someone in his audience, "Kri, kra!" His answer would come promptly, "What have you to say?"

"I myself was there," would be the response, and this would draw its question.

"What did you see?"

At this point, the person who had interrupted would 538 begin a song, and its chorus would be taken up by all who 533 were listening. And when it was ended, the leader of the song would shout, "Go on with your story, my man!"

Now the telling would be resumed, but only for two or three minutes, when again a voice would call out, "Bato! I was there, too!" And without further colloquy another song would begin. This was the way stories should be told, and when people knew what they were about, then they might change the words of old songs and make up new ones

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538 to fit the story that was being recited, or they knew the
533 songs that, as long as anyone could remember, had been sung at given intervals in a particular tale, and which themselves carried the action forward.

538 But Sedefo and our boys spoke not only of how a tale is opened and carried forward, but of the many ways of bringing a story to a close. A song might furnish a proper ending, or a proverb. "The reward for goodness is the cudgel," they agreed, might well end some of the stories about Anansi's exploits, or, "When you wish to eat with the devil, you must have a long fork." Or, "He who doesn't believe a lie, won't believe the truth," would sometimes be fitting, and "All showing of teeth isn't a grin." There was also the ending in which the teller vouched for his participation in the concluding events of his tale, as when he would say, "Bato! I myself sat with the King at his feast!"

But now our cook, whose patience was tried by this discussion, began to riddle.

"Mato!"

"Tongoni!"

"You have three things in your house," he started, looking about him at Sedefo and us, and at Kasanya, who had fallen asleep, and Asikanu, who sat in the doorway watching the younger woman. "One of them longs for daybreak. One of them longs for night. One of them longs for the world to come to an end. *Suma sa puru?*—Who will pull the riddle?"

Asikanu finally broke the silence.

"The first is a bed. It longs for daylight. The second is a stool. It is tired. It longs for night to come that it may rest. The third is a clock. It is weary of life. It wishes the world would come to an end."

And so a beginning was made. Sedefo turned to the cook.

"Friend," he said, "You tell a story. And then I will tell one for the Bak'a."

Our cook began: "Kri! Kra! All men in their places!"

Back came the answer, "Will it go?"

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"It will go! . . . Ananse and Dew were great friends. 539
The two worked together, each helping the other. So they lived.

"Well, now, they each planted a field of corn. But the corn belonging to Dew was finer than Ananse's, and Ananse was envious. He wished that he had the field which belonged to Dew. So he said to Dew, he said: 'Your corn is fine, but mine is finer. If mine were like yours, I should cut it, so that it might come up better.'

"But Ananse was lying. When you cut corn, it will not grow again. He was deceiving Dew."

Now came the voice of our town man, as he offered the first "cut" to the story: "Bato! I was there!"

"What have you to say?"

With this came the song. The one that he chose was in 539
the Kromanti language, and later he told us it was a komfo 533
song, one which taking its name from the African Ashanti word for priest, calls on the Ashanti earth spirits to bring the singer a magic wand which, when touching his head, will make him possessed by the earth gods. And as leader, he began:

Asanti boyo
Da mi widya
Akolo!

The others responded in chorus

Akolo, Akolo, Abanu ba.

Singer and chorus repeated verse and refrain, until our boy shouted, "Go on with your story, man!"

"And so, my friends, Dew cut his corn.

"But in the afternoon, when people passed, they saw that the corn had been cut. And they asked one another: 'What made Dew cut his corn? It was such fine corn.' Dew said it was Ananse who had made him do it. Then the people told him it would not grow again.

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539 "And Dew said to them, he said, 'Well, all right. He
533 tricked me with corn, but I am going to trick him with his mother.'"

Now came another interruption: "Bato! I was there!" and this time the song that cut the story was one of the spirit Sofia Bada. He is strong, and to dance for him is "heavy," a priestess of the city had told us. The words that were sung were a challenge sung by this warrior spirit of Allada, one of the ancient West African kingdoms.

Come try me
I am the man.
Come feel me,
I am the man
I am Sofia Bada
The strong man in Allada
Come try me,
I am a man.

"Let the story go on," said the singer.

"The story will go on. . . . So Dew worked hard until he had enough to buy himself a scythe, a hoe, an axe, and all manner of implements and clothes. And then he worked some more until he had put by some money.

"Then he went to his mother, and he said, 'Well, mother, I am going to do this. I am going to say that you are dead. You must hide upstairs, and I will set to work to make a coffin and to arrange for the burial.'

"And he did that. He sent word to all the animals that his mother died. And all the animals came together for the burial, and with them came Anansi.

"Now, Dew had it all arranged. He hid his mother underneath the plank on which the coffin rested, and placed beside her all the things that he had bought. He knew how greedy Anansi was.

"And so, before they were ready to take up the coffin, he began to wail, 'Ai, mother, see how you leave me. Not even an axe have you left for your son. Your son has not a single tool.'

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"As he said this, all the things began to come out from under the plank. Ananси picked them up, and wished his own mother would die at once so that he might have these, too. Dew went on crying. He now begged his mother for some money. His mother flung the money at him. And so the burial went off well, and the mourners went their way.

"But now, day after day, Ananси and his mother quarreled. Ananси said, 'Why cannot death come to you as it did to Dew's mother?' Then one day he and his mother quarreled again, and in his anger he took up a stick and struck her, killing her."

Again there was the voice: "Bato! I myself was there!"

And the song was taken up:

A fine man is Amusi
A fine man.
If you believe in God
You must believe in Amusi.

"Ananси now did just as Dew had done. He fixed the plank properly, and began to weep just as Dew had wept, but nothing at all came of it. So they buried his mother.

"A week later, Dew had his mother come to the field, and when Ananси saw Dew's mother, he said: 'Friend Dew, isn't that your mother I see there?'

"He said, 'Yes, it is my mother. You deceived me about my corn. Now I have tricked you with your mother.'

"And so Dew's mother was alive, but Ananси's mother was dead. It is ended."

2

Now Asikanu spoke. "Mato!"

"Tongoni!"

"I go into the bush to hunt. I greet the living, but they do not answer me. I greet the dead, and they speak."

This time Kasanya, who had sat dozing on his stool, heard and knew the answer.

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the uncleared bush, or the sight of a snake twined about a liana, no longer struck terror, and the flaying rains which came down so suddenly, and as suddenly were over, no longer even aroused uneasiness.

At the prow of our boat Bayo poled vigorously and continued his countless variants of the seketi song we had been hearing everywhere on the river, while Bibifo had made a refrain of our question, "How do you say this in your Saramacca language?" He would paddle in silence for a long time, only to begin muttering at the most unexpected moments, "Sa'macca tongo!" in the way of an old man who talks to himself. He would then repeat it over and over in ridicule of us, and sometimes in a singsong voice he would improvise lines about the white man who wanted to know how everything was called in the true, true Saramacca language, and how all that was told him he wrote down in a book.

"Great-grandfather," we would say to him, "why do you say this? Isn't it all right for us to want to learn how to talk to the G'aman?"

"*Kere-kere*—It's all right."

But having said this, he would engage Bayo in conversation, clipping his words, and using so much idiom and parable as utterly to confound us.

"Your language is difficult, great-grandfather."

"Ya-hai, it is meant for the people of the bush, white man," he would say with a pride we had not looked for from the mild Bibifo, who was now called Adrian. There was, it appeared, potency in the "word," and magic. The names for things, and the things themselves were one. The knowledge of Saramacca names belonged to the Saramacca people, and whether as Bibifo or Adrian, he was above all a Saramacca Negro, and a member of an important clan.

3

When we had been seven days on the river, our cook came to us and said he wanted to talk about something we had best know.

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"Tonight there will be dancing for you," And'u said, when we left the shrine. "I will go and pray again before the dance, and then I will go to my hammock early, for I leave at sunrise. We will meet again at the G'aman's."

The bassia's wife followed us to our house.

"You are a woman, yet you went inside the shrine. Maybe you do have gods, white woman. When you go in again will you pray to the Earth Mother for the woman Kupa, who is my sister? Twice she bore girl children, and both sleep. Now she is with child again. She wears many obias about her neck, and daily she washes with white clay. She is the woman with the wooden obia doll hanging between her breasts. No, not the one who has the small black sack about her neck. Any woman who is with child wears that. You will know her when you see her. She is beautiful."

7

The dance was held in the bassia's quarter, in front of one of his houses. The bassia was a man of wealth. He had three wives, while the chief had but two. Whether one of the three was only nominally his wife and had come to him at the death of a brother, we were unable to learn, but that his means were large was apparent. The house where his personal possessions were stored was built high on posts. A house so raised stood out from those about it and bore the same name as the moon. Underneath it, in the shelter made by the posts, lay a partly made drum, some carved wooden implements, and carpenter's tools. There was also a forked stick in the ground upon which rested a black obia pot with water and weeds in it.

The children began the dancing.

Ayo, ayo
Ayo, ayei,
Agida comes,
Ayo, ayo,
Earth spirits come,
Ayo, ayei.

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A girl of ten or eleven led the chorus. She had a string about her waist, and the strip of cloth that was tied about her neck as a ceremonial garment hung down cape fashion. About her navel and on her face the cicatrized patterns had been completed. Her voice was the shrill voice of a child, and the answering chorus was as shrill.

"Chaka, chaka!" called the bassia who was directing the dance. He was demanding those movements which bring into play the muscles of the hips.

The women waited. They had come in all their finery, their tunics of the newest cloth, their coils of brass bracelets and anklets made to gleam by rubbing with sand, their skins dark and glistening with the oil rubbed into them for the ceremonial occasion. Those whose hair was worn in braids had redressed it that day. About their necks were beads. Their cloths were fastened tightly about them, so that their figures showed plainly.

The men, also in their best, waited with them. The iron Kromanti obias on their upper arms fitted tightly, and showed the great muscles above and below them. Those who wore beads had two or three strands of yellow and red intertwined, the small beads worn by men, small almost as okra seeds. One or two wore love obias—cowrie shells sewed on a band of white cotton, and then dipped into water which was thickened with white clay. One or two wore a small black bell-shaped obia—half the size of their thumbs—on a black string, and with swagger had swung it about so that it hung at the back. There were obias below the knee, and obias which were great brass rings for the big toe of the right foot. But one or two of the old men, and the young man who was in training for an obia man, wore a jaguar tooth on a string of native twining.

Drums . . . drums. Would there be drums?

The word was whispered from one to the other, and passed like a wave over the waiting figures.

But there would be no drums. This was the day when two gods might come. The god of the ant hill, for which men and women might dance, and the buzzard god of the men's Kromanti society.

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535 men's Kromanti society. The elders had decided these dances were too violent to show to the white man who was with them for the night. Whatever of the esoteric the white man was to see was for the Granman himself to decide. To introduce the drums for the secular dances, and the half-sacred awasa, would be dangerous, for once the drums were there, and the spirit seized one of the players, he would begin to call the gods. When the gods came the dancing would take place until the spirits were satisfied.

"There will be no drums," said the bassia aloud. "There is no one to play them."

No drums!

Again the whispering began. The eagerness, the energy which had seemed to float in the darkness from one to another of the waiting figures began to be dissipated. The men and women still waited, but they were listless.

[533] [539] The little girl sang,

"The kogbwa drum
Sounds Tond."

And the chorus sang,

"Give us Tond."

The bassia who was master of ceremonies noticed the loss of interest with displeasure. It had not been the intention of the elders, when they had made this decision, to have it interfere with the reception of the strangers. He had counted on having spirited secular dancing.

"Friend," he said to the young obia man, "get the dancing started."

He turned again and again to the young man who was being disciplined in the way of the gods, exhorting him to beat time faster, to sing louder. And to the women he shouted, "Shake, women, shake—shake!"

The dancing grew lively.

[123] The white man had learned the words of the refrain, and was singing with them. Master Nigger! here was a white man who could sing their songs. The white woman had

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been shown by the bassia's wife how to clap her hands to the rhythm of the song, and now she could not stop for an instant, though her hands ached. 535 [123]

"*Batu mau*—Clap your hands!" the bassia's wife called to her, the instant her visitor's zeal slackened. She herself was dancing in place, her infant on her back, sound asleep.

"*Chaka*—Shake!" she too began to shout, and once she was so carried away by her hand clapping that she joined the dancers, and danced facing the obia man.

Tall and slender as she was, she crouched opposite the man, her child on her back, and executed the most amazing steps. It was as though every muscle in her body had been set in motion by some invisible dynamo.

An old woman interrupted them. She stepped into the circle, and put her arm about the bassia's wife. "Adoo!" she crooned, and brought her to her feet. Another woman had done the same for the obia man.

Now one of the men who wore both a love obia and a brass ring on his great toe began a song. The melody was only a variant of the one Bayo had sung and the seketi songs we had heard at Gankwe and elsewhere. But here the recitative of the leader was longer. What he sang was not unlike one of our own ballads. He recounted the experiences of a young Saramacca man on the Marowyne River. He had met a Djuka woman, who had taken up with him for his money, and in the end she had exposed him to her people. 533 [132]

Another man sang of a war that white men had with each other. Hard times came to the Saramacca people. There was no work. Then their Granman sent a message to the white elders. The Granman told them people should live in peace together.

The bassia had no need now to spur on the dancers. The small open space was a heaving mass. Nothing seemed immobile. The stars darted, the lights of the small oil lamps held by the bystanders flickered, the very posts which held the thatch of the houses in place and ended some feet 535 533

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above the roof, like great horns, appeared to sway now to one side, now to the other.

The hand clapping grew louder and faster, and faster still. *The rhythm changed. Now the dancers were in pairs,* feet interlocking and raised from the ground, while they danced each on one foot. It was one form of the *banya* dance. This was what was danced to the ancestors before the opening of sacred dances.

The bassia stirred uneasily and soon sought out the young obia man who was standing by. They whispered together for a few moments, and then the bassia spoke aloud.

"It is late, friends. Day will soon be coming. Let us end the dancing. Let us go to our houses."

He turned and whispered to his wife, who came forward with a smoking oil lamp in her hand. Like a knife she thrust herself straight between the pairs of interlocked figures, and began singing a slow moving song.

It is late,
Soon night will meet day,
Let us go to our hammocks,
Let us go to our homes,
Let the gods go to their homes.

In and out she went, separating the rows of figures, and her beautiful voice cast a spell over the dancers. With feet flexed, they stood poised to go on with their dance, yet did not move. The hand clapping stopped, and the singing. There was but the voice of the bassia's wife, who cut her way through the massed body of dancers, her sleeping child on her back, her oil lamp held before her, as she walked, arm outstretched. The dancers gave way before the flame in the small lamp, but still they stood there, their faces disturbed. It was as though food had been brought to whet their appetites and was as quickly snatched away.

At last a dancer reached for a lamp which was held by an old woman, and then another woman reached for hers.

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[539]

" . . . *It is late,*
Soon night will meet day . . . "

they chanted, as others joined them. Dancing to the slow rhythm of the singers, lamps in hand, all took up the song, until the bassia's wife led the way down the path. In a few moments the flicker of the oil lamps radiated in many directions, and the quieted dancers followed by their families went home singing. [35A]

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856 644 609 to all the medicine we had for them—he took it upon himself to instruct them to wash the bottles carefully, as he followed us to the storehouse, and to warn them that what was given was not to be taken internally.

"*A taki, a taki-e, u' no mu' bebe*—He says, he is saying, you must not drink this," he explained, with something of his mother's persuasiveness in giving instructions.

His grandmother had said one day half in jest that he would have a tiger spirit which would need to be reckoned with when he grew to manhood. He was a straight-limbed, wiry child, not troubled with the umbilical hernia so often [164] met with in children here in the bush, or with the distended "cassava belly."

The coming of the strangers had eclipsed all desire for [857] familiar diversions here. From early morning the children of the village stood about watching us, so that the brushing of teeth and the lacing of boots were carried on under excited supervision which continued day after day. But to this small grandson of Yankuso we were visitors in his quarter, and whether we were alone in the council house or were in the small house reserved for privacy, he would find his way there and stand about asking questions.

Sometimes, however, when he found us at work and saw that we did not wish to be interrupted, he would lean against the wall for a long time watching us in silence, until presently he would come to life, as it were, walk over to the table, and begin beating the Kromanti rhythm on it.

856 ●533 868 But he was not the only child who knew the drum rhythms. In the last village in the Pikien Rio, we met a two-year-old child who came to us with more than usual readiness and followed us about, his hand in ours until we came to his mother's house, where he left us to sit down on a wooden plank which lay near it. We had been in conversation with the older people and did not notice his going, until all at once we heard the slow beating of the rhythm to the Sky God. It was this child of two, drumming against the plank on which he sat.

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"*A naki apinti, ai!*—He is playing the apinti," his father said, laughing, and a woman who stood by said that when he grew up he would have an important god. It would be a good god, too, and it might be a great Komfo—a priest reincarnated in him.

Among the little girls who were with us most often, and now stood by with Yankuso's grandson, were the two daughters of Dida, the wife of Chief And'u of S'ei, who went about the Granman's village with white on her face and body. The little girls were also washed in the white clay, and there was white in the wool of their hair. They had the quick, startled movements of their mother, and one of them in particular was a nervous child, shy and easily frightened. She never came too close to the strangers, and, for a time, if they but caught her eye, she would begin to tremble with fear.

"Your daughters are handsome, Dida."

"Ai, they come from a good line," she said, laughing.

The Granman's younger wife said, "They will have many gods when they are big. They will have them from their mother, and theirs will be stronger yet. They are twins."

It was possible, she explained, by looking at a child to know if it would have the gods of the family. Sometimes the gods took a dislike to a child and refused to give it of their wisdom or protection, and sometimes the gods liked it so well that they gave it many gifts—the gift of a fine singing voice, the ability to dance better than others, and the good fortune to be liked.

"Until they are grown, the gods do not trouble them much," she added, "but we in the bush know a child who will have important gods, and we know if the gods will be kindly."

"Do you mean you know because of kunu?"

"*Ma kye*, all gods do not come from kunu."

4

One day when sitting among the women, the talk was of twins.

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845 "The next time you come to the Saramacca country, you must have twins here," the women said, laughing, "then you will see what a play we give for them. And for a child born after twins, and for a child who is born feet foremost."

The last, however, was not good, and they were really not in earnest, they explained, in wishing that type of childbirth upon the stranger.

"Such a child has a bad spirit. The mother almost always dies when giving birth."

"Is there no obia to save her?"

"The gods can save the mother if they wish. . . ."

There were special songs for twins which were sung when bandamba was danced. Several of the women, and Dida among them, began to sing them. The songs praised the generative powers of the man and woman who had "made" twins. As the women began their songs, they rose from their work and danced, for just as they could not 533 remember the words of a song apart from its melody, so 535 they could not sing the melody without the accompany- 845 ing dance movements which went with it. Words and melody and movements of the body were all part of the image evoked by the word "bandamba." With arms firmly planted on their hips, and feet slightly apart for balancing, the slow rhythmic play of abdomen, hips, and buttocks went on and on.

But as they sang and danced, the Granman's younger wife suddenly remembered that their voices must carry to the council house, and abruptly the women stopped, covering their faces.

"We're ashamed," Dida explained.

"But the men see you dance bandamba when you give your plays for twins, and the child after twins, and for marriages?"

"Yes, but then it's singing and dancing at a play."

When an occasion called for these songs and dances, it was quite another matter, she implied.

"It is not good to do this for sport."

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"It hurts, doesn't it?"

"*Ma kye!* It is beautiful. The men like it too much," said the girls in a chorus, laughing at the suggestion that the pain of the cuts would deter them from having them made.

Sometimes, of course, the older girl admitted, the wounds did become ugly. There was the girl from Godo, whose suitor had kept bringing her more gifts because she was growing handsomer and handsomer. She was all but ready for marrying, when one of her thighs became infected after the cuts. The wounds were so ugly that she could not even wear the tunics of the grown girl. The family was sacrificing to all the spirits of the earth, begging them to heal the wounds.

7

These days there were many visitors in the Granman's village. There was the girl the Granman had summoned to dance for his guests. She had, perhaps, that very summer got her cloths, and her reputation as the best dancer on the river had won for her a suitor who gave her many armlets and anklets. Her voice was fresh and flutelike in quality, and so fine that when she sang she placed a folded cloth over her mouth, or danced with her head low. This was the way of modesty before people, and humility before the gods.

The women said, "Her spirits dance well," when they watched her.

There was the large girl from a village down river who came almost daily. She had the body of a woman, yet she went about unclothed, and sometimes she appeared only with a string about her waist.

"She is ready for *pangi*—cloths—ai," the women said, "but her people do not want to give them to her yet."

They would not explain, however, why the attire of a grown woman was denied her. We could only conjecture about it. Perhaps she had no suitor. The man to whom she had been promised might have died. There might be other reasons.

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cloths, their hair disheveled, their faces without the glint which the oil gave to their dark skins, and their eyes without the touch of dark flame which the gleaming skins brought out. One of these women stood leaning against a doorpost trembling. Her hands were clenched, and her mouth moved without pause, and without sound.

"She hears the agida?"

"Ai. She wants to dance, but she can't. Her god is troubling her."

The white woman must not stop with them longer, and she must not come closer, the two women who stood beside their quivering companion called out at once, for the obia which she wore about her neck would be contaminated if brought too close to them, and its power to protect the wearer against danger would leave it at once.

"Do not come too close. Tomorrow I will return to my house, and after I have bathed and washed in pemba, I will be clean again, and then I will come to see you," the younger of the two women said.

The other said, "When you go there," and she pointed toward the woman's path, "do not go by the way of the broken calabashes. That is the unclean way. It is the path for the women who stay in this house."

Down the clearing the white woman continued until, when she turned, the open cooking shelter of Bassia Anaisi's quarter faced her. The floor of the shelter was of red clay, raised well above the clearing itself. A woman was laying a fire there, putting down the long sticks one end close to the other in the center, so that they radiated outwards in what seemed a perfect circle. Her child, who was fitted out with obias on neck and wrists and right ankle, sat near by watching her, and playing with a gourd doll.

The voice of the agida had a moment before died down, and now a song reached the white woman. It came not from across the river, but from somewhere directly behind the houses grouped about the clearing beyond the cooking shelter. The song was a repetition of several melodic phrases, sung in varying rhythms, so that it had a disturb-

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533 ing quality as it continued slowly and yet more slowly for a time, then quickened sharply at irregular intervals.

533 "Who is singing?"

996 "The gods," said the woman at the fire, without pausing

[372] to look up as she fanned the small flame with a woven fiber fan.

"Whose gods?"

"Amasina's, and the god of a woman of the G'aman's family. She got back from the menstrual house last night, and this morning when Amasina got her god, she got one, too."

"May I go and listen to the singing?"

"Yes."

But before the white woman had walked ten paces, she came face to face with Bassia Anaisi.

"I am going to your quarter, Bassia. The woman at the fire said I might go and listen to the singing. Is it all right?"

"Yes, go."

In a few seconds she came to a house before which several women were gathered. Outside its doorway calabashes stood in a curving line across the entire stretch of front wall, some filled with a dark liquid and others with rice, while directly in front of the door itself a dark uncorked bottle had been placed.

Down several paths came women, each with a calabash in her hand, and each as she reached the line of calabashes placed hers beside the others, and went into the house. The women entered singly and remained there but an instant, emerging with lines of white over their arms and bodies. What had taken place in the house while they were there it was impossible to tell, for the singing had continued without interruption.

Two voices were heard now. The voice which had carried across the clearing still intoned the word "Ondyi," while the other chanted in a soft and beautiful voice words which came without pause or harshness, except for a strange hissing sound which issued from somewhere inside the house.

"May I come closer?"

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"Yes, move closer."

The white woman now went toward the open door, and through it saw a little of the inside of the house. Like all Bush Negro houses, it had no windows of any kind, and what light there was came from this low open doorway. Near the door sat the woman who belonged to the family of the Granman. In her hand she held an egg-shaped piece of clay which she rubbed between her hands to the rhythm of her song, and at intervals lifted first one hand, then the other, rubbing the white clay on her face and arms. The thin layer of white over the dark of her skin gave to her appearance in the dark house a strange color. She swayed on her low bench as she sang, her body curving from her hips first to one side, then to the other.

"Ondyi, ondyi," she sang over and over, and with the quickening of voice, she called "bonsu."

This word "Ondyi," the women explained, when they urged the stranger to greet the god as was fitting, was the greeting of the deity, the god's way of saying their everyday word "Odi."

The eyes of the woman at the door were half-closed as she sang, and she seemed dispirited, though with the quickened swaying she did rouse herself for an instant. She had no kerchief on her head, and none about her breasts.

"Her god hasn't got her very hard," the women said. "Go inside, perhaps when you speak with him, he will begin to stir. They want you to come in."

Into the house the white woman brought her bench, and sat down close to the possessed woman at the door. When she became accustomed to the darkness of the house, she saw a pair of eyes fixed on her from the farthest wall. The figure against this wall was so much the color of the house itself that it was not until a few moments had passed that the crouching form of an old woman was distinguishable. The old woman sat motionless, her eyes fastened on the stranger.

The white woman freed herself from the intent stare of the old woman against the wall only when a sudden

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THE GODS SPEAK

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Woman, I care for you,
I will be your god."

There was consternation among the women who stood outside listening. The Akantamasu god was one of the strongest on the river. He ranked only slightly under the great obia spirits, which the Sky God when creating the world had sent as wisdom for the living to combat the capricious lesser gods, and humans who were dominated by evil spirits. Differing from the obia spirits, however, who befriended the living, and brought healing to them, the Akantamasu god was an avenger, surpassed alone by the yorka, the ghosts, who avenged by killing instantly when they chose, while the Akantamasu god killed more slowly.

But there was concern for the possessed woman, as well. She had spoken the name Affi, her day name, the name which summoned her soul. When not in a state of possession, she would never have spoken it before a stranger, except in a whisper to an obia man who came to cure her, or to a diviner to whom she came to ask why her soul was troubled.

[551]

Presently the white figure rose, breaking the tension, and, chanting, went from the hut into the clearing. Affi and the white woman followed. In the light of the clearing, a faint resemblance could be seen in the grace of the body of the figure in white to the pleasant Amasina. Of the brown of her skin, only the ankles and feet showed.

Both of the possessed women began pacing back and forth in the clearing, in time to the rhythm of their songs, but while Amasina danced with an easy stride, Affi shook and quivered and moaned.

"When the gods come, we do not speak. We sing. The speech of the gods is song. So it is," one woman whispered.

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Another said, indicating Affi, "Her god troubles her. She gave you a strong god. Are you afraid?"

"When the god comes to you, you will speak tongues. Now you have two gods. When Kesekia comes to you, you will sing Kesekia songs, you will dance to him."

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stepped from the raised platform ready to leave, when he noticed a drum which stood in a corner near the door of the hut, and reached almost to the thatch.

We had seen many agida drums during our stay in the Saramacca country. Some of them had been half as tall as a man—a round hollowed trunk of a tree, with wooden pegs in the side on which the drumhead was fastened. The agida had no elaborate tuning device such as the other drums carried, and on it was neither the beautiful carving with which the apinti was decorated, nor the white pembadoti of the tumao. The agida was the deep bass voice of every trio of drums which played for the sacred dances, and whatever other rhythms were struck on it, its steady note set the beat about which the more incidental rhythms played. We had been told what seemed fabulous tales of the size of some of these agida drums, but not until we saw the drum which stood in the corner of this shrine to the snake gods did we realize how large they might be.

The white man glanced about him. The rest of the party had not yet caught up. In the dimness of the shrine there were only the three men. He stepped up to the enormous drum.

"May I tap it?" he asked.

Reaching up, his arm outstretched above his head, he stood on tip-toe before his fingers found the taut head and gently drummed a rhythm there.

"It is large. It must have a deep voice."

"It is a big drum. Would you like to hear it? The man who plays it is near by."

Now there were four in the hut. The drummer spoke.

"Do you want to hear the drum, white man? I will play it if you are not afraid. But if I play, I will call the god, and when I call him he will come. Shall I play the drum?"

The white man asked that the god be called.

The bassia beckoned to the white woman to come, and signed to the others to remain outside. Framed in the low doorway, shutting out the glare of the sun-swept clearing, were the crouching bodies of women and children who

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peered into the inner darkness, the whites of their eyes moving with the movements of the strangers.

Gently the drummer laid the great cylinder of wood flat on the ground, and from the thatch took down a hard-wood stick, dark and smooth with use. The drum filled more than half of the wall near which it lay. Stooping, the drummer began to call the Vodu gods. It was the rhythm we had heard from across the river early in the morning. The drumming had sounded low and distant then, but in this small enclosure the volume of sound was deafening. It seemed to be pushing against the yielding woven walls, pushing outwards and up.

The rhythm was disturbingly irregular. There was, in the sense of the steady rhythms of the dances, no rhythm at all, and this uncertainty of beat added to the volume of sound racked the listeners. When we thought we heard a repetition of an interval, a sudden change in tempo brought us up with a start. On and on the man struck the drumhead, sounding the heavy beats with the stick, while with his free hand he kept up a running fire of obbligato to the message for the god.

The heads in the doorway began to move nervously this way and that as the message to the god continued, when suddenly they disappeared behind someone who was coming at a run. A moment later Dida was in the hut.

She was again possessed. Her body shook with the intensity with which she experienced her god, and her eyes glowed with a steady fire. Back and forth she paced, and when the drum had sounded, she addressed herself to it, listening for its voice and answering, listening again and answering in tones which grew more and more harsh. Then she turned to us, and began to chant

"*I am the god Kesekia*
From back of the prison,
From the French shore,
I come.
I am the god Kesekia."

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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Once more she resumed her frenzied pacing, and from time to time as the drum spoke she whirled about and replied. Now and again she would repeat the phrases which the bassia said was the French snake god speaking—"Ti donc!" "Kesifo, kesifo!" "Ti donc!"

"Speak to the god," said the bassia. "Speak to him in the French tongue. He will answer you."

In spite of the bassia's urging, we stood silent, for it was crowded in the little hut, and Dida's god was not as genial a one as was Amasina's. Her body shook and quivered, her pupils were dilated, her voice became harsher as she turned to us with her hissing cries.

"Ti donc!

"Kesifo!

"Ti donc!"

For a moment, the god had done speaking on the drum. Gently the stick tapped against the wood, and the drummer's left hand was quiet. Then once more the roaring note began, and as the heads disappeared from the doorway, a second form shot inside.

A young woman entered. She had no white on her body, as had Dida, nor was there any kerchief on her head or about her breasts. When the drum sounded she had been in her house seeing to her small infant, but hearing the agida speak the words of the Vodu god, she could not hold back longer, for her god came into her and sent her to the shrine.

Now there were two who paced inside the enclosure, calling their answers to the drumbeats, until once more the steady tapping of the stick on the wood took the place of the strokes on the drumhead, and the second woman sang:

"*Maumbe-wa,*
Maumbe-o,
Father Manga
Father Maumbe.
God Maumbe-wo
God Malimbe, Dagowe.
Tutu calls, ye-o

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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• [533]

Tutu calls, ye-o.
God is there in the river alone,
God Tutu calls,
Ye-o, yo."

787 So the young woman sang as she paced, her body twitching and quivering, while Dida repeated her exclamations. The man again took up his invocation to the gods, then resumed the soft tapping against the wood.

He said to us as he tapped, "My own god is Agida Wenowa. She is a Vodu god, and when I dance I put a parrot feather in my hair. When I play the agida, then all Vodu gods come. The agida is the drum for the Vodu gods."

As he spoke to the slow beating, yet two more figures came crowding in. We had been so intent on the two possessed women and on what the drummer was telling that, not until these new arrivals were at our side, did we notice them. One of them was Affi, the other Amasina. They were as we had left them, Amasina still in her white tunic and kerchiefs, her face and upper body yet more thickly coated with white so that only the eyes were alive, Affi still a grayish color, still anguished.

"We heard the voice of the god. We came."

But there was no longer room in the small shrine for the women to dance. The beating of the stick became fainter and fainter; the drummer no longer touched the skin which topped the drum. Fainter and fainter still came the beat, until the young woman who stood there without white on her body shook herself, as though she were coming awake. For a moment, all was quiet.

"He is gone."

"The god is gone."

"He has released her."

The drummer put back his stick. Slowly he lifted the drum; gently he stood the agida upright in its corner.

7

976
609 In the Granman's council house, voices of people standing outside reached us. From one to another the news was told.

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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GRANMAN MOANA YANKUSO

"You will play everything, white man," he had told us earlier. He had been especially anxious that we play the songs we had recorded in Haiti on our way to Suriname. Often he had spoken of these songs to the chiefs at council meetings.

"White man, tell these friends the words of those songs in that foreign tongue."

He had wanted us to speak before these men the words Legba, a deity to them in the bush as he is in Haiti and in West Africa today, and Loko, and Aida Wedo, and to translate the words of the Haitian twin song we had recorded, and the one to the water god Simbi.

Now he sat in his folding chair and looked on in silence, his face thoughtful. The songs he heard moved him deeply, and his expressive face showed it.

When, in the Haitian songs, the women heard the word "Ago-e" which they recognized, they uttered a shriek. It was one of their many words for ancestors. They cried out again when they heard "Aida Wedo" pronounced, and "Loko." They, too, sang of Aida Wedo, and of Alado, and of Loko. Dan was one of their words for snake.

The white man asked permission of the Granman later to record some songs of the people of the village, and promptly Moana Yankuso addressed a man who stood by. The man was a good singer, and his seketi improvisations had made him a figure on the river.

"Sing for the whites, mati. Let them hear in their far country how our people sing. Let them know that we can sing, that we sing much."

The singer Mapasi sat down and began to sing. His voice was of fine quality, and he was as modest in the midst of all these women with this gift which the gods had given him, as had been the young dancer whom the Granman had summoned to dance for us. He sang in a low voice, and directly into the horn. Accompanying his singing was the hand clapping of the women, which in the small council house was deafening. His recitatives were the longest we had heard on the river, longer by far than those which had

Herskovits & Herskovits F-5 (1958-1959) 1934
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surprised us that night at S'ei, and when he paused for a moment the women took up the chorus. From one song to another he went, and the hand clapping grew louder, and the chorus joined in more frequently, often breaking into his recitative, so that there was harmonizing of theme and chorus.

Once or twice the Granman called for a song we had already recorded, in order to give Mapasi a rest.

"Play us something from the lower river, white man. Let them hear their own songs, too, sung by others."

When the excitement of hearing the machine reproduce the song they had just sung had grown less intense, the singers repeated the song the phonograph was reproducing for them, for to listen to music without singing was difficult for them, just as when they sang, they could not but move their feet, though there was scarcely more than room for them to stand one close to the other. But a Bush Negro needs little room for his dancing, so that as the phonograph played their songs for them, they clapped their hands and danced in place. For a short interval, at least, the existence of the whites was forgotten in their pleasure of singing with the machine.

Until late into the night we played our records for them, and they sang for us. Whatever the consequences to the frail records of soft wax, we decided to play as long as they would listen, because of something in the manner of the Granman, something of wistfulness, let us say, and something, perhaps, which went deeper yet, as he sat there—a black Hamlet following a mute soliloquy while he looked on with his clever, perplexed eyes.

"Ai, so it is," he said at last, "and now let us go and get sleep." He rose and the others followed him out of the council house.

II

Early the next morning, while the tent on our boat was being finished, the Granman came into the council house with a calabash and a buzzard's feather in his hand. He came up to each of us in turn, and struck with the medicine-dipped feather the tops of our heads, brushed the eyes,

Herskovits & Herskovits 8-4 (1926-1929) 1934
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Surinam

BAYO, THE PLAYBOY

The conversation turned to the lumbering Bayo had been doing. He had been helping some of the Gankwe men bring to the river the wood they had felled. To cut down a tree was not hard work, Bayo told us. It was, however, no easy matter to bring the trunks to the water. For in the tropical jungle timber does not grow in the convenient "stands" known to the northern forests. The searcher for rare woods will find a single purple-heart tree here, and there, some distance away, a brown-heart or one of the other trees for which the white man is willing to pay well. With machete or axe the tree is felled and stripped of its bark, and squared into a great long timber. The under part of each end is shaped so that as it goes down the river it will not split against the rocks it strikes.

Going back from the river bank are to be seen openings in the bush and these lead to places where trees have been cut. At short intervals lengths of branches are laid across them. It is over these that the timber is hauled to the river —over these main lumber ways, and over the smaller ones that must be cut deep in the bush from every felled tree to these principal paths.

Bayo had been hauling lumber. Cut and dressed, the paths made ready, the logs had been taken to the river. The Gankwe men had summoned their friends and the men of neighboring villages to help them. The weight of the hard wood is such that it takes great strength to haul the squared logs over the paths. Bayo had gone with the men into the forest, and there they had spent more than a week, eating of the rice and cassava of the men whose lumber they were hauling, and having a pleasant time of it, with joking and horseplay.

"When we haul the wood, we sing *so te* . . . until . . . " he said, prolonging his last syllables in the characteristic way.

The one whose logs were being brought to the water opened the singing by first speaking his thanks in a formal chant to those who had come to help him.

REBEL DESTINY

"You have come to go, come to go far, come to go far to bring the wood to the water. But it is long, it is far, to the river. Thank you, friends."

Then the song was taken up by the workers and, with each rhythmic measure, the great piece of lumber went farther through the jungle on its way to the river. When he had chanted for us the greeting to the men, Bayo began to sing a song relating to men's casual exploits with women and, as he finished the song, he laughed. "White man, if you came with us, you would hear what songs the men make up about women!"

3

The phonograph had delighted Bayo from the first. When Apanto had summoned the spirit of his obia to fight the machine, Bayo had watched. When the white man's glue had repaired the broken belt, and the hot sun had made the machine "walk" once more, Bayo had approved.

"The machine is not weak," he had said. "I will sing for it."

And sing for it he did.

But the curse of Apanto still troubled the machine, for up the river and down there had been difficulty with it. Often when there was a particularly good song to be recorded, the belt would give, the machine would fail the white man. The story of the prowess of Apanto had gone up the river with the Gankwe paddlers, and when the machine stopped, heads nodded, and we would catch the word "obia" among the murmurs of the bystanders.

Bayo thought, it seemed, that the machine's proud spirit was by this time properly chastened and, since twice the machine had refused to work while he was singing into it, twice had made him stop the song and its drum accompaniment, he decided to take matters into his own hands.

"White man," said Bayo, shortly after our return from up the river, "I will help the spirit of the machine. I will

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
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alone or with some friend, into the wax cylinders that spoke back in such mysterious fashion. When Apanto came to visit us, Bayo smiled as he saw the obia man approaching from the landing place.

"His obia is strong, but mine is strong, too. Let him sing into the machine."

Apanto was visibly surprised when he saw in operation the machine his spirit had wrecked. "The machine is not weak, Apanto," we assured him. "It has its own strength, and now it has the strength your gods have given it. For in the true, true Saramacca, a great obia man spoke his message to the Great God into it, and since then it has walked well with us."

Out of the corners of our eyes, we could see Bayo's pride.

"Sing for us, Apanto," we urged, for he had a beautiful voice. "Sing us an Apuku song."

Now Apanto sang, not once, but many times. It is true that when we asked for Apuku he sang Vodu, and when we asked for Vodu he sang Toné, and when we asked for Toné he sang Kromanti songs, and when we asked for Kromanti he sang the sacred dirges called "Papa" songs. Yet this was not otherwise than might be expected, and it was not too difficult to play the records to interested men of other villages, whose startled comments would soon tell us the kind of song he had sung.

It was another day when Apanto again sang, and some of these who had witnessed his first victory were about. One such addressed himself to Bayo, who was sitting near.

"Apanto's spirit fought the machine, and stopped it. But the machine works and sings back to Apanto. Its strength has come back to it."

"Awa, Apanto's spirit is strong," we heard Bayo reply, "but there are other strong spirits on the Saramacca."

4

Bayo had spent the night at Gankwe, and had returned resplendent with a new hairdressing. We joked with

11 Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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Chapter XVII

SARAMACCA OBIA

I

NO WORD of African origin which has survived in the New World has taken on such grim meaning as has the word *obia* in many of the islands of the Caribbean. No Negro there will speak of it, and its practices and properties are secret. When obia strikes in the islands, it is usually a matter for the government, and the forms its vengeance knows too often take a grisly turn.

In the life of the Bush Negro, however, obia is everywhere, and its name the commonest of bywords, for among the Suriname Negroes obia is not black magic, or witchcraft, or sorcery. Black magic [in the Suriname bush is *wisi*, and wisi is never confounded in the Bush Negro's mind with obia.

"Obia is good. Obia heals," they say in Suriname.

"Obia warns, obia protects."

"Obia protects a man against the force of a bullet, the thrust of an iron weapon, the dangers of fire."

"You want to know what obia is, Massa?" our cook asked one day. "We have this *komfo tongi*—this priest's song:

"I am no master,
And I am no slave,
Yet when the masters come,
They carry water for me."

SARAMACCA OBIA

So it was with each god, until the boy was ready to be initiated into the Kromanti Society.

"There are many, many krutu, white man, for a boy has much to learn."

When those who directed the krutu were satisfied that the boy had learned how to serve the gods he had been given, that he knew their powers, and those things which were hateful to them and would incur their displeasure, then a dance was held for him so that he might demonstrate before the assembled festive villagers that he was ready for manhood.

"We give a big play for a boy who gets his gods for the first time. When the gods come to him at this dance at the bidding of the drum, and he dances hard, then his family is pleased. When a boy dances, then we know what is in him. We know whether his gods are strong, whether he is to be feared."

Once the father had transferred his gods to his son, he did not dance much himself. He might continue to play the drum at sacred dances, but dancing and drumming were for the younger men. His son's worship of the gods through the dance released the father for the study of obia. With the governing elders, the father took up his rôle as a clan member who sought the will of the ancestors when new tasks were to be undertaken.

"What happens if the father has few gods to give his son?" we asked.

"Then his mother's eldest brother gives his to the boy."

"What if the boy's uncle has none to give?"

That happened so seldom that he could not remember such an instance, but he had heard it said that this had occurred once or twice.

"A man must have gods to help him live. If his family can give him none, then they buy gods for him. Sometimes there are gods in the family that are not too strong, and they want the boy to have strong gods. They go to a man who knows about such things and who himself has strong gods and buy a god for the boy from him."

1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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his rattle danced his dance, the moon sank behind the screen of branches.

It was late. Slowly the last dancer came out of his orgy of possession. One by one the drums stopped until, for a moment, all was quiet. Then, taking the apinti drum up the path beyond our clearing, one of the drummers drummed an invocation to the spirits that had come.

We trained our flashlights on the path which led to the river, lighting the way of the dancers to their waiting boats, while they sang for us the seketi song we had heard the night of Zimbi's funeral.

Thank you, thank you, white man,
For coming to the Saramacca River,
For bringing us your diamond fire,
To light the darkness of our path.

5

At the village opposite our base camp, a girl had died shortly before our return from up river. The eighth night after the death was to be commemorated with the usual dancing of "eighth-day night," and with the ceremony of throwing away food for the spirit of the dead.

"Come tonight and we will dance for you," the men of the village said. It was agreed that they should come for us when they were through with the ceremony for throwing away the food, for the bereaved family would not look kindly upon the intrusion of the whites at the ceremony.

As we waited for the messenger, Bayo prowled about uneasily. He had been nervous for the past few days. His spirits had been troubling him, and he said he needed to dance. It was some time since he had danced, and his spirits were vexed with him for this neglect.

"If they dance Kromanti, I will dance, too," he said.

We talked with him of the rum we would have to take. The strength in which it was distilled made it necessary to cut it with water. Bayo watched us as we took out one bottle, prepared the rum, and then took up another. His hand interposed.

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"OBIA COMES!"

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Opete kwasi Adjaini-o
Opete kwasi Adjaini-obia-o
Opete kwasi
Tide Adjaini-a weti kwao, kwao, kwao, kwao.

The chorus repeated,

Opete kwaso, Adjaini-o-yi
Opete kwaso, Adjaini-o-yo
Opete kwaso, Adjaini-o-kumani!

They were becoming more and more agitated. The rattles sounded a faster tempo, the drums beat louder, and the music swung into another song.

Amanu Djadja-o
O-o-o-o-o-o
Amanu Djadja-o
O ye-e-e
Kuma, luku, mowa,
O-e Mama-e
O-o-o-o-o - o - o . . .

This was a song of greeting for the Djadja spirit. Bayo 764
still urged the rhythms out of the improvised apinti which 533
he was playing. The drummers were calling all the Kromanti spirits, the buzzard called Opete, the jaguar, Tigri, and Djadja, the "devil." Would they come?

The question was answered soon enough. Out of the 787
forest into the clearing ran one whose obia had come to him. It was Opete obia and, in his strength of possession, he had torn off two branches from a palm tree in the bush. These he held under his arms, so that, as he pranced about in his dance, he impersonated the awkwardness of the great carrion bird which gave its name to his obia. The tufts of palm leaves projecting from behind his flexed arms were wings. He leaped as in flight, then with startling rapidity he began turning round and round to the flapping of his wings.

Apanto suddenly seized a stick we held and, whirling it 787
about our heads, was off to his dance, joining the six or 796

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

534 word meaning "to make a hollow sound") are dance drums. Each is made from a short section of hollowed-out log. Long pegs are driven into the outside, around the circumference, close to one end. Animal skin, with brown hair still clinging in places, is stretched across the opening, and thonged over the pegs. The pegs are set at an angle, so that driving them further in stretches the skin more tightly, tuning the drum. Some villages possess drums six to eight feet long. They are called *ageedah.*

● 533 A young boy of fourteen or fifteen flippantly beats a few notes on one of the tomtoms. He puts it between his squatting legs and bends over it, striking the resonant skin with the flat of his fingers, using both hands to produce a rhythmical pattern. He holds his wrists loose, like a virtuoso. To set the drum on the earth while playing it would close up the open end, keeping the vibrations inside, and produce a flat sound. The drum is held by the squatting black at an angle with the ground, the pulsating tambour making an insidious beat that produces strange effects. The moment the sound of the tom-tom reverberates through the jungle evening, the atmosphere seems to change.

The crowd is shy at first. There is still a little sun in the air. Darkness is necessary if the ancient gods are to possess us. A child of eleven squats beside a drum and places it between his knees. His creditable tempo arouses the envy of his playmates looking on. Three men arrange themselves for the coming dance, one with the *apenti,* one with the *nanda,* while the third wrestles with the little boy who will not relinquish

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

his hold on the *baboula*. The child is finally allowed to remain. He can keep time well enough and that is what the *baboula* is for. 533

It is now night, jungle night. The tomtoms crash out in a full-throated chorus. It is a driving, compelling rhythm of hollow sounds. The timbre is heavy, hypnotic, maddening. The drummers achieve a difference of tone by striking near the edge, which gives a shrill sound, and then returning to the centre, which booms by contrast.

The effect of the drums may be a species of hypnosis. Hypnosis can be produced experimentally by the sound of rhythmical tapping, without any condition of sleep.

The patting of the fingers on the drum-head of dried skin seems to induce in these primitives a type of hypnoid exaltation. The cause of it is the monotonous, rhythmical repetition of booming sounds. Fatigue falls away. Memories of other evenings around the jungle fires come crowding back. They imagine that Apuku seizes their bodies. Demoniacal possession is a phenomenon well known to history; here we have it in the South American bush. Here it is called *winti*. 533 158

The hypnoid stimulus—monotonous repetition—is reproduced in the other instruments that accompany the tomtoms. The first of these is the *saka-sake*, a gourd stuck on a handle and filled with pebbles. Then there is the *quaqua*, a flat board of resounding wood that is beaten with a hard paddle. Now the primitive orchestra is in full swing. [534]

By this time the crowd has arranged itself in a circle, with a bare space in the centre. The fires glow luridly on black 533 796

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

533 faces. The drummers stop to tune to the desired pitch, driv-
796 ing in the pegs with the back edge of a bush-knife. Then they resume, rattling out a sharply insistent tempo. Women begin to sway. Some of them start a plaintive jungle song. The drums never stop.

796 A woman disengages herself from the crowd and enters
535 the open space. She bends forward from the waist at a right angle. Her arms form a circle beyond her head, saffron palms outward. She sways from the hips, her torso contorted with sinuous suggestion. Then her feet on the bare earth rap out the tempo that the brown fingers of the men are drumming on the dried skin. The others begin patting juba.

It is a false start. The woman interrupts her dance to criticize the orchestra for not playing in her mood. The crowd is not yet possessed.

Dodo, the woman *bosseia,* or boss, goes about urging the women to begin. Meanwhile the bahkra slips through the
123 crowd pouring out drinks of high wine to add to the dark
782 hilarity of the occasion. Always before drinking they will
273 spit on the ground a libation to the gods. A mother gives the rum to her seven-year-old child, who does not flinch from the burning potion.

A new tempo. Three little girls, slim in their nudity, enter the central space. The oldest is about eleven. They stand with their backs to us and begin the *bandamba* dance. The evening is on.

Standing still in the firelight, hands behind their heads, they arch their loins and raise their buttocks up and down.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Then comes the *sacatee* dance, accompanied by songs of the rebellion. Ancient heroes live again. Once more raids are made on outlying plantations. The spirit of defiance that Stedman found at Boucou is still kept alive. Then come softer songs—songs of love. *"Te e durmi e songa me, grandanke,"* a girl sings plaintively. She is telling her lover, "When you sleep, dream of me, many thanks." *"Te kai me u seni neauco, becan na bonu soni e ta layme"*—"When you lead me to deceit I will not follow; such things you should not teach me."

Again the dancers find fault with the orchestra, protesting loudly. They are not satisfied with the rhythm. Abruptly the chief dancer seizes a drum and rolls out a call to Apuku, god of the forest, asking Apuku to come.

Dimly through the darkness they can feel some response. Apuku is coming. Everyone runs back a few steps and utters a slight scream. The spirit of the bush god is entering their bodies. He is welcomed with a little dance, jerkily done, in which all participate. Then comes the special Apuku dance, where writhing, circling, snaking arms simulate the twisted lianas of the jungle, which is the god's home.

Once the spirit of the bush god has entered them, they cannot stop. The drums increase their volume and tempo, until the rhythm is too rapid and intricate for white ears to follow. Now truly they are hypnotized by the feverish monotony, the shuffling beat of fingers on the drum-heads. Because of this trance, fatigue is forgotten. The little *baboula* keeps steady time, throbbing like a heart-beat. Flat hands

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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former hunts. What a noise they make! At the crucial point 521
of the story they imitate the explosion of the gun.

Excitedly: *"Me luku, me see one biggie teegre* (jaguar). *Me makke gunu go BOOM!"*

After shouting this last with the greatest volume that his throat is capable of producing, the narrator imitates the sound of the dead body crashing through the branches to the ground. All the thrill of the day's hunt is not merely remembered, it is re-lived in realistic detail. The snarl of the wounded cat, the gasping, baby-like cry of the wounded platyrrhine, bring forth appreciative laughter from the intent audience. Soon the next man tells his story; the bond of sympathy is so close that they all go BOOM together. One jungle inhabitant has triumphed over another, in memory.

While we curse in our efforts to sleep there comes through 533
the darkness a Djuka folk-song. It conveys the pointed moral of a man who thought himself very clever, but despite that he is now sleeping at the bottom of the river:

Cony mong,
Cony mong,
Dede na leeba.

or, "Cunning man, cunning man, dead in the river." At least, we reflect, with the sardonic grimness of tortured insomnia, he is now able to sleep.

/26 cont./

728 communicate to one another their opinions, in what way they
695 wish to see the points of difference resolved. If they are agreed concerning these, then they return to the chief in the shed and the discussion of the matter takes place anew, until finally agreement exists. During this consultation of the elders or council
[562] members a solemn seriousness prevails among them. Women are sometimes admitted to these conferences, but never have a voice, and come merely to listen and to see.

After the matter has been settled to the satisfaction of all parties, the cup once more makes several rounds among those present, and thereafter everyone goes silently and quietly to his camp or dwelling.

Chapter XVIII

Music, Musical Instruments

533 Their music is very simple and monotonous; one makes use of it, to the accompaniment of song and dance, at festivals and cult ceremonies.

534 The instruments are variously used and doubtless according to the type of event. Thus the so-called long drum, called agida (2), is played at cult ceremonies; on other occasions one

2. Papáá drum.

uses the small or apientie drum. Furthermore they have an instrument called kwakwa stool by them, a stool or board of very hard wood on which one beats with two sticks.

534 When they dance the papaá-wenti, an African idol dance,
535 they use the agida drum. For the songé, or ordinary dance, they play the small drum or apienti.

They dance the soessa to the beat of the small drum and with the kwakwa stool; in executing the last-named dance a great deal of competition prevails among the dancers, and the one who

/161 cont./

[764] The dead person's spouse, his nearest relatives, and his children come and hang their hammocks inside the krɛyɔsu, where they will live until broko dɛ (eighth day after the death).

[533] [535] The village people begin the tukka songs and dance, which will last part of the night, while the friends and near relatives of the dead man lament seated, head covered with a cloth.

[824] The first day after the death, as soon as it is morning, the kisimã arrive, and begin to make the coffin, using mahogany boards always kept on hand, thanks to the head of the village.

[613] The women of the dead man's lineage prepare a meal which is offered to the kisimã about 1:00 P.M. at the end of their work.

While the coffin is being made, the dead man's friends and distant relatives arrive in crowds from the neighboring villages, bringing tafia and cloth as offerings. Two kisimã lay these pieces of cloth one by one on the body saying, "So-and-so buries you."

[767] These pieces of cloth are divided up; about 15 are put into the coffin by the kisimã, part of the rest serve as pay for the kisimã, part as pay for the ɔlɔmã; another part, finally, is used for dressing the widower and his co-wives (or the widow), showing thus that during the whole mourning period they live dependent on the dead person.

Then the kisimã close the coffin without any other rites taking place. The late arrivers who bring more cloths knock the coffin saying, "I bury you," and put them down on the ground.

[692] The work of the kisimã is over; they bring the body outside the krɛyɔsu, in front of which has assembled the council called lãnti kuutu, which constitutes the judicial apparatus of the Boni.

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765 535 533 Next come the dances, always in the order sɔ̃nge, susa, awasa, the rhythms given on the apinti drum. These are not possession dances and do not appear in themselves to have a religious meaning; all involve choruses in which the singers do not accompany themselves on any instrument at all; these songs have no other meaning than to exalt life; the Refugee Blacks find their best artistic expression in them. Many of them demonstrate dazzling imagination; the subjects are extremely varied, and every year new ones are created. But there is a certain number of "classics" which reappear in each festival. Let us mention: "The man who calls his dog lost in the woods"; "The song of the Balen River"; "The woman who watches over her daughter," etc. These songs are very beautiful, and in the great mourning festivals it is difficult to hear them without emotion. Songs and dances follow one another without interruption until the sun's return. This is what is called broko dɛ, "break a day." This ritual, which has a key value in the eyes of the Refugee Blacks, appears to be the affirmation by the group of the triumph of life over death.

765 [769] The fifth day, a kind of buffet is served to the guests under the mortuary shed. In the afternoon there is the offering of food to the ancestors, tɔwɛ nyã; this rite is a communion between the dead and the living.

[769] [775] On the morning of the sixth day, the ceremony ends with the offering of water, celebrated not at the fraga tiki but at the edge of the shed, in honor of the ancestors. They invoke one last time /182/ the ɲɔ́rka of the dead man (or the dead woman), while asking it to separate from his spouse for good and to leave her in peace! "U puu a umã a baaka; yu ãŋga umã yu paati tidɛ, na: mu siki, na: wã sani mu du ɛ̃ŋ, a mu dɛ bũ. (We lift the mourning of (this) woman; thou and the woman, you separate from each other today; she must not be sick, nothing must happen to her, she must [illegible] well)."

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765 The figures are almost similar to those of the awasa dance,
[535] except that the dancers move forward stamping with the left foot.

[533] Songs follow, but entirely covered by the drum and without great musical interest.

Second day, Nov. 9. Day called puu dɛ ("a day is withdrawn"). No rite is performed on that day. Each one is busy with his occupations. The women pound and winnow rice.

Third day, Nov. 10. Day called lolo mata "the pestles are rolled." That day they carry to the edge of the mortuary shed pestles, wood for heating, and everything necessary for the preparation of the next day's food (1).

1. When there is a spouse in mourning, it is on that day that he is brought to the mortuary shed by the dead person's lineage, congratulated, and clothed in new garments red in color.

Fourth day, Nov. 11. Day called poti ala sani na a krɛy ɔsu ("to put all things into the mortuary shed").

About two o'clock the young men who have been to cut wood for heating come back in boats decorated with pennons, in the midst of hurrahs and shots.

At three o'clock the basia circulate in the village, calling the women who appear from all sides carrying heavy baskets of cassava.

The provisions prepared for the festival are brought to the
[293] edge of the shed. Many of those present have brought a bottle of tafia. The basia collect all the tafia in large demijohns. In all there will be six demijohns of 15 liters of tafia and as much cane juice.

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776 787 [184] The Kumẽnti. These gods are common to the Saramaka (Kromenti) (1), Djuka, and Boni. The Kumẽnti are considered

[174]

1. There is no doubt about the origin of this word; it is a deformation of Coromantin, name given in the 18th century to Ashanti country. The "Coromantin Negroes," reputed to be particularly intractable, played a large role in the slave revolts. The Kumenti cult of possession must originally have been a cult peculiar to the Coromantin nation.

to be benevolent gods and friends of men, so their possession is very much desired. They do not come into men spontaneously, they are obtained only by applying to a teacher. In principle [562] only men can obtain Kumẽnti, while on the other hand only women can have Bũnzunki /sic/.

776 787 751 The Kumẽnti are specialized in protection against fire and against machete and gun wounds. These dangers hold the largest place among the anxieties of the Refugee Blacks, who spend almost all their life in the bush and with whom nearly [189] all sores become infected and have serious consequences. Thus the Kumẽnti cult holds an important place in their magic; even someone who is not possessed will try to obtain from these gods an ɔbia that will protect him from these various dangers.

153 791 787 786 The instruction of the disciples of these gods takes as its pattern the procedures described above, but the collective dances appear to play an essential part. The teacher calls on the gods by beating a special rhythm on ordinary drums (apinti) and by [533] uttering invocations punctuated by the rattle of the saka (Indian [534] maraka, that is, hollow calabash provided with a handle and containing seeds).